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NURSING IN MISSION STATIONS

A GLIMPSE OF MEDICAL WORK IN CHINA

By C. IRENE K. SUMNER¹

New York, N. Y.

It has been my happy lot while travelling in China to see something of the hospital and dispensary work that is being done by different missions all over the country, work that has so often been the wedge to open the doors of the Chinese to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ.

It is most inspiring to see what excellent work is being done under almost insuperable difficulties and the result of years of patient waiting and striving is seen in the well-equipped hospitals that are to be found in the larger towns and ports, for instance those in Peking, Shanghai, Foo Chow and Kiu Kiang. Some of these hospitals are training schools for Chinese medical students, others are giving Chinese nurses a systematic, three-year training.

Up-country there are still great difficulties to contend with in carrying on medical work. Imagine first the fear and distrust of the people, the difficulty of dealing with them in a foreign language (and Chinese of all the languages!); the hopelessness of the cases that come too late, half-killed by the fearful remedies of the native doctors; the absence of nurses of any kind; the lack of appliances; the dangers of a riot if a patient should die, particularly after an operation. Imagine some of these hindrances and you will find that it needs a high order of courage and love to do pioneer work whether as doctor or nurse in this country. We at home find it so easy to criticize, with our up-to-date hospitals and perfectly organized nursing system, that it is well for us sometimes to think of this work done by our sisters in loneliness and difficulty, in unhealthy surroundings, with extreme discomfort, day in and day out. This devotion of obscure lives, this accumulation of self-denial, this taking up of lowliest burdens, surely this is a great career and our criticism seems poor and mean in comparison.

One of the hospitals that I saw was Dr. Mary Stone's at Kiukiang on the Yang-tze River. Dr. Stone is a very charming Chinese woman

¹ It will interest our readers to know that since this article was sent to the JOURNAL for publication, Miss Sumner has been at work in Belgium and when last heard from was the nurse in charge of the wounded at the Chateau den Brandt, Antwerp.

who graduated in medicine in America. So much has been said of her hospital and work that I will only touch on it. It was the only mission hospital I saw that was entirely managed by Chinese without the help of foreigners. This fine hospital has 100 beds for women and the nurses receive a three-years' training. When they are graduated they are in demand all over the country. The dispenser, the anaesthetist and the nurses were well qualified, well trained women and they looked remarkably neat in their white coats and trousers and white overalls. They have intelligent, sweet faces and also very gracious manners, an asset that our vaunted education sometimes leaves us without. There was no hurry, no bustle, yet everything seemed to be done. I think it is

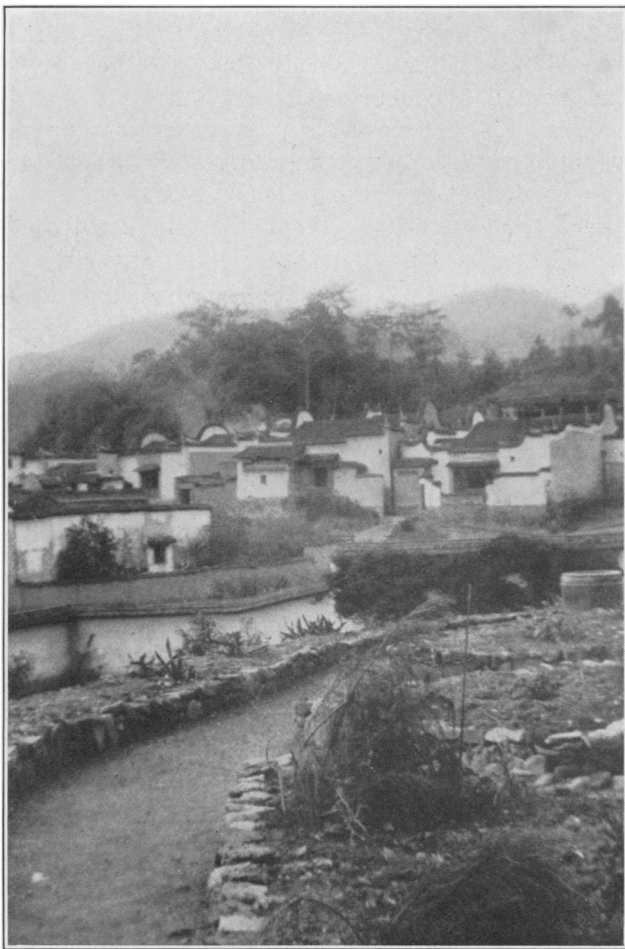


DR. MARY STONE AND THE BRIDAL PARTY AT KIU KIANG

a Chinese characteristic to go on without stopping or tiring with unflinching sweetness of temper.

I arrived in the middle of a pretty ceremony. A protégée of Dr. Stone's was marrying one of the prominent men of this enlightened town. They were both Christians and the wedding was a compromise between a Chinese and American ceremony. Many of the nurses were among the bride's attendants, looking very pretty with their wreaths of flowers. I took a snapshot of them on the steps of Dr. Stone's house.

To give you an idea of the work, Dr. Stone sees about 20,000 patients in a year, taking the hospital and her private practice together. It



SA IONG

is wonderful how much work she manages to accomplish, the evangelistic aspect of which is never obscured.

For some months I was at Sa Iong in Fukien province, where the small dispensary is doing big work. It is under the care of a trained nurse who is working valiantly under difficulties. It makes one's heart ache to know how often a doctor is needed, both for advice and for operations. The nearest doctor is a two-days' journey away. It takes a great deal of study, obscure cases often presenting themselves, and



A BABY WHO WAS THROWN AWAY
AND ADOPTED BY THE CHINESE
TEACHER'S WIFE

NGUK SENG, THE HOSPITAL MATRON
AT DONG KAU

diagnosis is difficult. I remember one case in particular, of a man who had extensive ulceration of the leg. I had never seen anything like it. We wondered if it could be one of the many forms of leprosy but the short history rather negated that. This little dispensary has four beds and naturally, with so limited a space, only the worst patients can be admitted though on the other hand, patients who ought to come in will not trust themselves to the foreigner's care.

Foot binding is almost universal in this province and it is very sad to see the women hobbling along on feet that look something like nine-

pins. They carry heavy children and it is pathetic to see them try to keep their balance by taking tiny steps on a small spot of ground in trying to stand still.

Tucked away among the hills in this lovely province of Fukien is the Mission Compound at Dong Kau. There is a well built and well arranged hospital for women under the care of an Englishwoman who is a clever doctor. There are forty-five beds which are nearly always full. This is a mission that has grown largely owing to its medical work. Many of those who have found peace for their bodies in the sheltering walls of the House of Healing have opened their hearts to the balm of the gospel of love.

Besides the hospital for the women, there is a dispensary for men that has a large attendance. Syphilis and all its attendant ills is horribly rife. I saw some awful cases, one in which the nasal passages were entirely occluded and the mouth nothing but a mere hole.

The destruction of girl babies is terribly common in this province. One woman who came up with a baby had thrown away five girl babies and had been made to take this one back by the missionaries after it had been found on a dust heap, alive after two days' exposure.

There is a very competent little Chinese matron at Dong Kau. She is a Christian, as are her two assistants. A Bible-woman lives in the hospital and teaches those who are willing to listen to "the doctrine" or talks to the women who are unable to get up. Some of the children who have been there a long time know the gospel story by heart and will ask for the Bible pictures and take them to show the others, explaining with all the zeal of small evangelists the story of our Lord's life.

The work in the hospitals up-country is largely medical, partly owing to the fear the Chinese have of being operated on and partly the impossibility of getting efficient assistants. The days have not yet passed when the death of a patient after an operation will empty the hospital and in some places, cause a serious riot. The medical work is good and particularly interesting in the study of certain tropical diseases. A microscope is most valuable and aids materially in diagnosis.

To be in this great unchanging country now in the throes of her new birth is a wonderful experience; China crying out for education, China asking for western methods, imploring us for hospitals, training her men and her women, and yet—one has only to go up-country a little off the beaten track to find ignorance, superstition and the terrors of heathenism. They are possessed by the fear of evil spirits; they are haunted by devils; they are encompassed by the limitations of the middle ages.

Still this leavening and uplifting work goes on, slowly and surely, combating the evil, teaching the ignorant, straightening crooked paths, preparing a way for the Kingdom of our God, the Kingdom of righteousness and peace. Let us help by our comprehending love if we can help in no other way.

A ZULU CHRISTMAS TREE

By MARTHA S. MacNEILL

Natal, South Africa

I want to tell you civilized people about a real true Christmas tree. You should have seen my four native nurses, Elizabeth, Edna, Nomhlantze and Julia, when I suggested a Christmas Tree. "Oh, Miss MacNeill," they all exclaimed in chorus, "We have wanted one so long."

We had just closed our men's ward temporarily so that gave us a big, long room apart from the patients. Dr. McCord had a farm near Durban where most of the hospital help live. That gave us a possible place for finding a tree.

Christmas Eve, just after lunch, I took our garden boy and started for the tree. Holly trees do not grow in Africa and fir trees are scarce. There are no pines in this country so we decided to get a branch from a tree called "vemsinsi." This is a large tree with thick foliage and well adapted to the use to which we wished to put it. Margaret and I pulled down all the vines we could carry and quantities of ferns and other green things. Then we started for the hospital.

O, the joy of decorating that tree! The nurses, Mrs. McCord's housemaid and cook and my hospital cook, a few of the almost-well patients and some of the nurses' friends, had all brought their gifts and we tied them on. Dr. McCord brought over his phonograph. The natives know very little about games so we determined to give them some fun.

Soon after dinner Mrs. McCord came over and we invited all the natives in. Such delight! That Christmas tree must have seemed wonderful to them. They sometimes have them in the afternoons but I suppose a tree decorated and lighted at night was a new sight to most of them.

I left a convalescent in charge of the few ill ones we had in the hospital and we all entered into the fun. First we got a sheet, put a tiny bit of cotton wool in the center of it, arranged half of the people on each side of the sheet, holding it firmly. The object of the game was to see which side could blow the ball off the sheet on the opponents'